

News Update from Nepal  
February 3, 2006

The seven-party alliance (SPA) and the CPN (Maoist) get-together has boosted the morale of Maoists to maneuver against the establishment. But, it did not strengthen the hands of political parties in any way to squeeze concessions from the king. The determination of the government to go its own way with the elections indicates that it is not interested in handing over power to the current leadership governing the political parties. The medium-term scenario is that violent behavior to disrupt the civil polls or creating turmoil will provoke vicious onslaught from the security forces. Party leaders don't see the downward spiral of democratic process in the excessive use of violence, as they seem hopeful of outcome of the fusion of urban agitation and rural insurgency articulated by the CPN (M).

### **The Government**

In course of their 22-day visit to the eastern parts of the nation, King Gyanendra and Queen Komal have met people from various levels of society and listened to their grievances. On February 1, the King spoke to the nation and expressed confidence that a road map of consensus will forever eliminate all possibilities that violence and terrorism will reemerge in Nepal. He said that patriotism is the only means of creating a democratic society. By April 2007, all popularly elected bodies will be active in ensuring a bright future for the Nepalese people through a dedicated exercise in democracy so as to create a welfare society. The King offered the Maoists "security and opportunity necessary to shoulder the responsibility of governance in their capacity as people's representatives" if they wish to dedicate themselves in the service of the people through the ballots, renouncing their murderous acts against the nation and people. Referring to political parties he said the foremost "precondition for consolidating democracy is to gain support of the people through ballot and respect their mandate."

On January 17, the government has appealed to the seven party alliance (SPA) to find a political solution to the political problem through dialogue and understanding. The government urged them to cancel the demonstration planned for January 20 in the capital - keeping the possibility in mind that the Maoist could mingle the crowd of SPA. It imposed night curfew in Kathmandu and several districts. G.P. Koirala, Leader of SPA, said that the alliance would not be averse to take up the issue of announcing a ceasefire with the Maoists leadership if the government withdraws the municipal elections.

On January 19, Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Panday invited foreign envoys at the foreign ministry and briefed them about the emerging political situation. He said, "The government is forced to take harsh steps because of the understanding between the rebels and the parties and possible infiltrations of rebels in the mass meetings." On February 2, Home Minister Kamal Thapa accused the SPA, saying the "SPA along with

some media organizations and international community are encouraging Maoist rebels to carry out their activities.” He added that the government was fully prepared to thwart the weeklong Nepal *bandha* (general strike) called by the rebels on February 5-11.

On January 17, the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) representative for Nepal Ian Martin regretted the “excessive restrictions on peaceful assembly during legitimate political debate” and reacted “recent Maoists attack on the Thankot police violated international humanitarian law.” On January 18, the government has warned the agitating seven-party alliance with “strong legal action” if they fail to comply with the government’s request to break up relations with Maoist rebels. Home Minister Kamal Thapa said, “If you keep on supporting the Maoists’ violent activities knowingly or unknowingly, the government will be compelled to take strong action under law, which may lead to an unpleasant situation.” He said the party’s existence would be at risk if they tied up with rebels. He said, “Maoists have been encouraged to enter Kathmandu with sophisticated arms due to their understanding with the seven-party alliance. They are intensifying violence here with the alliance’s backing.” On January 19, the government imposed curfew in Kathmandu valley the whole day and night and arrested about 200 leaders and cadres of various political parties and put NC President Koirala and UML leader Madhav K. Nepal under house detention for three months. Koirala was released soon. On January 23, Home Minister Thapa said, “The Government wants to move forward with dialogue and reconciliation and is open and committed to these issues. But he said the government is not contemplating the postponement of upcoming elections.

### **Civic Polls**

On January 25, the Election Commission (EC) announced that it would insure all the candidates taking part in the upcoming elections on February 8. The insurance amount of mayors and deputy mayors is Rs. 7,000 and Rs. 6,000 respectively, while ward chairmen and members will get Rs. 5,000. It revealed that altogether 236 and 192 persons filed candidacy for Mayor and Deputy Mayor respectively in the 58 municipalities. Several candidates for ward chairman and members had withdrew their candidacy due to Maoist threat and pressures from their families. Twenty-two mayors and 20 deputy mayors were elected unopposed. In some municipalities like Baglung, Bharatpur and Bidur municipalities’ seats outnumbered contestants. The seven-party alliance called out on the nationwide general strike the same day to protest the polls. G.P. Koirala urged civil servants to refrain from cooperating with government in its bid to conduct municipal elections and contribute to movement for democracy. The security officials said that they are prepared to provide “security as per the demand of the Election Commission.” The UN system in Nepal in a statement expressed deep concern that 75 polling stations for next week’s civic polls will be located in school buildings. “If schools become a place where the conflict is fought out, then they are no longer safe as places of education.”

### **International Pressures**

On January 19, a press statement issued by the Embassy of Finland on behalf of the EU expressed concerns about the recent developments in Nepal, in particular the arrest

of democratic party leaders, members of civil society and human rights activists.” The Japanese Embassy, the UK and the US also expressed similar concerns and asked the government to release all arrested people promptly. The UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed dismay and called for an urgent dialogue in order to avoid confrontation and to bring a bilateral ceasefire between the government and CPN (Maoist) forward. He added, “This appeal was not heeded, and the four-month unilateral ceasefire declared by the Maoists came to an end.”

On January 27, EU’s statement said that municipal elections would be another step backwards for democracy and will likely to polarize positions. It said, “Political forces seem to be moving toward an ever more severe confrontation and polarization thus increasing the risk of deepening the political crisis.” It also condemned the resumption of violence by the Maoists and the recent murder of an election candidate in Janakpur. It suggested an “inclusive and comprehensive peace process.” On February 2, the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, urged the King to “show necessary leadership and foresight” by restoring all political and civil liberties. It would be necessary to start a dialogue with major political parties and taking steps towards a ceasefire and inclusive national dialogue, which could bring an end to the conflict. The US Commander of Pacific Command, Admiral William J. Fallon, expressed “serious US concern about the situation in Nepal”, while he has met important officials in Kathmandu. He said before leaving (February 2): “Reconciliation between the king and the parties is not only indispensable to bring back democracy but also to effectively address the insurgency by the Maoists.”

### **Maoist strategic offensives**

The CPN (Maoist) broke the 4-months long ceasefire on January 2. CPN (Maoist) chairman Prachanda said, “The Royal Nepalese Army is surrounding our people’s army, which is in a defensive position, to carry out ground and air attacks. Therefore, we are compelled to go on offensive not only for the sake of peace and democracy but also for the sake of self-defense.” In a statement Prachanda said that CPN (Maoist) is forced to end the ceasefire and to engage in ‘People’s War’ again for the sake of peace and the protection of CPN/M workers and promised; a) its future activities will be targeted towards the royal regime; b) that it remains committed to the 12-point understanding with the SPA; c) if the situation will improve it would be happy to return to ceasefire at any-time; and d) request to UN agencies, international organizations and the world’s population to support its mission to end cruelty against the human rights of Nepali citizens.

On January 4, the US asked the “Maoists to abandon violence and rejoin political mainstream. The end of the ceasefire at this time is unhelpful and contrary to that goal. There can be no excuse for the resumption of violence.” The UNHCHR Louise Arbour said, “Those on either side of the conflict who commit violations must be held accountable: not only the perpetrators but also those in command of forces which commit such acts may be subject to individual criminal responsibility before a court of law.” On January 6, the European Union (EU) said, “A critical need remains for all parties involved to take immediate steps for complete cessation of hostilities and to work toward inclusive na-

tional dialogue in Nepal with a view to resolving the underlying causes of the conflict peacefully.”

In January, after the breakdown of ceasefire CPN (Maoist) intensified their attacks and killed 6 Armed Policy Force (APF) personnel in Nepalgunj, looted Rs 3m from Rastriya Banijya Bank of Birendranagar, destroyed a District Development Committee office at Mahrndranagar and attacked several government offices and security establishments - zonal police office, Rastriya Bank and RNA barrack in Dhanagadhi. Security forces killed 10 Maoists in Tanahun district, rebels killed 14 policemen in Tahnkot and Dadhi-kot, the main entry point to Kathmandu valley, and security forces killed 15 Maoists in Syangja operation and two security men were also killed in the process. Maoists bombed Hetaunda NTV tower and the municipality office of Mahendranagar.

On January 19, contradictory to the party leadership's previous clarification to the UN, local Maoists in Nepalgunj said: “We are planning to take special action against those participating in the municipal elections.” Rebels killed 6 policemen in Banke. On January 22, 30 persons were killed in Hetaunda during a clash between security forces and rebels – among the casualties were 22 rebels, six security persons and two civilians. The same day, Maoist killed the mayor candidate in Janakpur, bombed the municipal office in Biratnagar and Morang DDC chief's house. On January 24, rebels attacked security posts in Nepalgunj, killed 3 security men and injured 8. On January 25, rebels destroyed two VDCs buildings in the Kathmandu district, Syangja municipality and attacked government offices in Jaleswor. On January 27, rebels blasted bombs in various parts of Nepalgunj and attacked the security camp in Bjojpur; leaving 11 Maoist and 2 security persons dead. On January 29, Maoists killed a women in Nepalgunj in crossfire. On January 31, rebels attacked the district administration and police office in Palpa. They killed 11 security men, freed 129 prisoners, abducted the police inspector and Chief District Officer, and destroyed the palace in Palpa. Eight Maoists were killed. Rebels also shot an army man to death in Kathmandu. On February 2, clashes occurred in Nepalgunj and in Biratnager. Maoist killed a ward chairman and rebels carried out a powerful bomb in Tanaun's hospital.

On January 16, although the campaign to make children a zone of peace was launched about five years ago, children still continue to suffer from the hands of rebels and security forces. Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center (CWIN) reveals that 60 children were killed from January to November 2005. 48 of them were killed by Maoists, six died in crossfire and another six died in the hands of security forces. The rebels have abducted 14,873 children along with their teachers for an indoctrination program and security forces arrested 24 children and raped a girl. 1.2 million children work as unpaid labors in the country.

### **The Seven-Party Alliance**

The SPA issued a statement to appeal to the government officials, saying that they will “blacklist” any one who tries to cast a vote and promised to rehabilitate those fired by the government after their government is established. The national convention of NC (Democratic) on January 5 removed constitutional monarchy from the party statute. As-

serting that monarchy and democracy cannot go together, NC (D) has proposed the following agenda before its general convention: remove monarchy from the party statute, constituent assembly is the main agenda to resolve conflict, the members of the Central Working Committee are increased to 45, eight members are reserved to backward sections and regions, an end of autocratic monarchy and restoration of democracy are the main goal and it calls for the release of Deuba and Singh, scrapping of RCCC and repelling the cases against them. The parties have chosen Deuba as its president for the next three years.

On January 10, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) split for the second time in less than a year, as Home Minister Kamal Thapa is elected as chairman. Previously, Surya Bahadur Thapa led a splinter group and formed the Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP). On January 24, the Election Commission had barred both of the RPP factions from using the official election symbol "plough" and gave instead the symbols "peacock" and "flowerpot" to the Rana and Thapa groups respectively.

The SPA organized a rally in Janakpur on January 12. Political parties, professional organizations and civil society are holding rallies every day and defying the government's restricted area. On January 23, Koirala said, "There is no question of striking any deal with the king in a situation where he has seized people's power and imposed direct rule. There is no possibility of compromise with the King." According to Koirala, the outline of movement goals comprises the holding of election for constituent assembly, restoration of House of Representatives and an all-party government.

### **Civil society**

The new year began with accusation and counter accusation between the Nepal Bar Association (NBA) and the Supreme Court (SC). The NBA demanded the resignation of Chief Justice Dilip Kumar Poudel over the newly appointed *ad hoc* judge Pawan Kumar Ojha on the grounds that they were incompetent in protecting the constitution and the appointment reflected a nexus of the court with the government. The NBA decided to boycott both the judges.

To strengthen civil society, the European Commission (EC) has provided grant assistance of 1.632 million euros to organizations working on human rights, peace and democracy in Nepal. On January 13, it signed three grant contracts with a total value of 2.153m euro within the scope of its Conflict Mitigation Package 1. The projects are financed by a special budget for the EC Country Strategy paper 2002-06 for Nepal, which aims to consolidate democracy and reduce the impacts of the ongoing conflict. On January 7, the president of the Citizens Movement for Democracy and Peace (CMDP), Dr Devendra Raj Panday, said, "Civil and political rights cannot be restored permanently unless we topple the 235-year-old monarchy." He added, "The municipal polls will further curtail people's rights. It must not be held and we seek citizens' opinion on ways to stop it." Human rights activist Krishna Pahadi said, "Establishment of people's democracy is the only alternative now, as history has proved that monarchy cannot come together with peace, human rights and democracy." On January 22, the Professional Alliance for Peace and Democracy (PAPAD) issued a seven-day ultimatum and urged the

king to form an all-party government. They threatened to hit the streets if their demands are not fulfilled. Chairman of Civic Peace Commission, Krishna Jung Rayamajhi, and Chairman of Civic Society for Peace and Development, Dr. Sundar Mani Dixit, appealed to the king to create “minimum atmosphere for dialogue by deferring announced polls, releasing all the political prisoners, lifting the terrorist tag labeled against the Maoists and inviting the parties in the conflict for talks.”

### **Foreign Affairs**

On January 8, the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, said that “India does not agree with monarchy as a political player, competing with political parties for political power. Constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy are the twin pillars in Nepal. As far as the king is concerned, we continue to believe that he has a role as a constitutional monarch, which is not only important but also critical. The King’s road map to restore peace and democracy is incorrect. There seems to be a very big question mark to the municipal elections. In principle, everybody should applaud elections because they are the fundamental foundation of any democratic system. But with political parties boycotting the municipal polls, actively boycotting as they say and the seven-party alliance represents about 95 percent in the old parliament. That puts up in our mind a big question mark as to whether these elections will be free and fair, whether they will be credible.”

On January 14, Norbert Meyer, Deputy Chief of the Mission at German Embassy, said: “Political targets can be reached not with violence but with negotiations. Both the warring factions to conflict should find a way out of the ongoing crisis through dialogue.”

On January 25, Foreign Ministry Spokesman of China, Kong Quan, said: “China is very concerned about recent political changes in Nepal. We hope all forces in Nepal can narrow their differences through dialogue and work together for the country’s development and prosperity.” On January 31, the US State Department Deputy Spokesperson, Adam Ereli, said: “We urge the king to return to democracy by initiating a dialogue with the country’s political parties. After one year of unsuccessful authoritarian rule, this is the best way to address the Maoist insurgency and to build a brighter future for Nepal’s people. Twelve months of palace rule have only made the security situation more precarious, emboldened the Maoist insurgents and widened the division between the country’s political parties and the king.” He said the US remains particularly concerned by the Maoist insurgency that “presents the most immediate threat to a peaceful and prosperous Nepal.”

### **Economy**

To give relief to consumers, the government reduced the prices for consumer goods on January 14, which the government introduced in the Finance Ordinance 2006. Major issues are widening the tax net, maintaining appropriate tariffs and effective administration, encouragement of barter trade, improvement on custom duty, bringing the traders with a monthly turnover of Rs 200,000 within the VAT net, etc.

### **German grants to Nepal**

On January 31, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany has agreed to provide a grant assistance of Euro 16.1 million to Nepal. Among the grant assistance of Euro 16.1 million, Euro 12.6 million will be an additional assistance to meet the financing gap for the Middle Marsyangdi Hydroelectric project, 3.0 million for carrying out the Basic Health Program and 0.5 million for the Neighborhood Support Program.

Contact: [Marei.John@fes.de](mailto:Marei.John@fes.de), Tel.: 030 – 26 935 915  
[Ulrike.Ehnes@fes.de](mailto:Ulrike.Ehnes@fes.de), Tel.: 0228 – 883 508